



# APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS

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## FACT SHEET: The Real Threat to Our Ports Since September 11<sup>th</sup> Bush and Republicans Have Resisted Crucial Funding To Protect Our Ports from Terrorists



*“And we're working hard to make sure your job is easier, that the port is safer.... America will be better protected... No, we're better and stronger and wiser today than we were. We're working harder than ever before.”*

Remarks by the President on Homeland Security  
Port Elizabeth, New Jersey  
June 24, 2002

This last week the White House has been quick to remind the public that port security lies in the hands of federal border agents, the Coast Guard, port authorities and police agencies. But a look at their record shows they have opposed needed funding for these agencies at every opportunity, putting our ports at risk.

In 2003 the Coast Guard estimated that it would need \$7.2 billion for port facility and operational needs to fully implement the security requirements of the Maritime Transportation Security Act. ([Federal Registry, July 1, 2003 p. 39272](#)) But, the Bush Administration has never proposed funding for port security grants, the grants used to pay for these needs. Congressional Republicans have done little better, providing only \$910 million for the distinct port security grant program and operation safe commerce since the 9/11 attacks.

The need is real and well documented:

- Even before 9/11, in 2000, the Interagency Commission on Crime and Security concluded American ports were highly vulnerable to potential terrorist attacks. ([Report, Fall 2000](#))
- This year, a report by the New York State Senate Committee on Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs found problems at the ports of New York and New Jersey. Specifically, they found: law enforcement officials were confused about their jurisdiction; no uniform system exists to verify the identities of those entering the port; the Coast Guard is overstretched in trying to help with port security; and that only a small percentage of cargo is inspected when it arrives. [[Congressional Quarterly](#), Jan. 31, 2006]
- In March 2005, a Government Accountability Office report found that “assessing the progress made in securing seaports is difficult, as these efforts lack clear goals defining what they are to achieve and measures that track progress against these goals.” (GAO-05-448t)



**TIMELINE: House Democrats have tried to increase funding for port and maritime security every year since 9/11. House Republicans and the Bush Administration have opposed them at every turn.**

**2002 Emergency Supplemental Funding (Department of Defense Appropriations Bill)**

- In the immediate aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, despite warnings that our ports were woefully unprepared for terrorist attacks, President Bush requested no funding for port security grants and only \$203 million for increased Coast Guard homeland security operations. Later that year, the [Hart-Rudman Commission](#) reported that port security was underfunded and seaports were still vulnerable to terrorist attacks.
- When congressional staff asked what it would cost to adequately protect our ports senior Coast Guard personnel said they had been instructed by the White House and their superiors within the Department of Transportation not to discuss the agencies budget needs with Congress.
- On November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in a nose-to-nose meeting at the White House, President Bush told key Congressional leaders that he understood a number of them wanted to add additional funding for homeland initiatives – including port security – but that the administration had asked for enough money and if Congress approved additional funds for that purpose he would veto the bill.
- On November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Democrats supported an amendment by Dave Obey (D-WI) on the House Floor to increase Coast Guard port security operations by \$165 million and direct grants to individual ports for security assessments and enhancements by \$200 million. The [Administration](#) opposed the Obey amendment, saying “additional funding is not needed at this time and should not be included.” On the House floor Republicans voted against allowing the amendment 216-211 ([Roll Call 454](#))
- The final homeland security supplemental included only \$6 million more than the President had requested for the Coast Guard and only \$93 million for port security grants.

**2002 Terrorist Attacks Emergency Supplemental**

- Five months later, the President conceded that additional homeland security funding for the Coast Guard was necessary and requested \$255 million for the Coast Guard. The Bush request did not include funding for port security grants.
- The second 2002 supplemental provided an additional \$125 million for port security grants and operation safe commerce not requested by Bush. After this funding was enacted, the Bush Administration proposed to take the \$105 million for direct port security grants and use it to instead fund TSA salaries and expenses. The Congress denied the President’s request. (PL 107-206)

**2003 Emergency Wartime Supplemental**

- On April 3, 2003 Democrats supported an Obey amendment to increase funding to improve port and infrastructure security by \$722 million on the House floor. Republicans blocked consideration of the amendment by a vote of 221 to 200 ([Roll Call Vote 103](#)).
- The final bill included only \$20 million for port security grants.

## **2004 Homeland Security Appropriations Act**

- On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Democrats supported an Obey amendment in the House Appropriations Committee to increase port and maritime security by \$500 million. Republicans defeated the amendment on a party line vote. ([House Report 108-169](#), p. 97)
- On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Democrats again supported the amendment to increase port and maritime security by \$500 million on the House floor. Republicans blocked consideration of this amendment by a vote of 222 to 200. ([Roll Call Vote 305](#))
- On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003, during a meeting of the House and Senate conferees, Representatives Obey and Sabo, and Senator Byrd offered an amendment to increase funding to enhance port and maritime security by \$475 million. Republicans defeated this amendment on a party line vote.
- The final appropriation for port security grants was only \$124 million.

## **2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill**

- On June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Democrats supported an Obey amendment in the Appropriations Committee to increase port and container security by \$400 million. Republicans defeated the amendment on a party line vote. ([House Report 108-541](#), p. 128)
- On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Democrats supported the same amendment to increase port and container security by \$400 million on the House Floor. Republicans refused to allow consideration of the amendment.
- On October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2004, during a meeting of House and Senate conferees, Representatives Obey and Sabo, and Senator Byrd offered an amendment to increase funding to enhance port security by \$150 million. Republicans defeated this amendment along party lines.
- The final House/Senate conference on the 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations included only \$150 million for port security grants

## **2006 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill**

- On September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005, during a meeting of House and Senate conferees, Representatives Obey and Sabo, and Senator Byrd offered an amendment to increase funding for port and container security by \$300 million. The House conferees defeated this amendment along party lines.
- The enacted Homeland Security Appropriations included \$173 million for port security grants.

For more information read Ranking Member Obey's speech to the [National Press Club, December 18, 2002](#) or his [speech to the Center for American Progress, June 2, 2004](#)